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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH FRENCH PREMREP
RIPERT

Classified By: U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR
REASONS 1.4 B/D

11. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Rice paid an initial call on French PermRep Ripert on January 26. Ambassador Rice reviewed her priorities and sought Ripert's views. Ripert offered his views on the state of the UN, the importance of progress on Security Council reform, engaging the Secretary General on Climate Change, non-proliferation, and ensuring a role for the UN in the reform of the financial architecture. Ripert said that it was important for the U.S. to signal its serious engagement on Security Council reform, especially to emerging, moderate powers from the South like India and Brazil which needed a greater stake in UN decision-making. This in turn would encourage them to engage more responsibly on the global challenges, and to help pay for them as well. Ripert said that the Secretary General wanted to engage in a serious way on climate change and hoped the U.S. would support this. On Iran, Ripert said it was important to maintain the unity of the P-5 plus one process and believed that there was space for one more sanctions resolution targeting Iran's nuclear network, but afterwards that route would be "exhausted." In a brief discussion about upcoming Security Council meetings, Ripert said that he hoped France's initiative to organize a Council session January 29 on respecting international humanitarian law would deflect murmurs from the Arab Group about a possible UNGA special session to call for an inquiry into IHL violations in Gaza.
END SUMMARY

12. (C) French PermRep Ripert opened by welcoming Ambassador Rice to the UN. He described the current state of Franco-US relations in Paris and New York as outstanding, and noted that P-3 coordination was strong and "provides the key elements on which the Security Council relies." He underscored that France took no initiative in New York without talking to the US and UK first. He hoped that close cooperation would continue.

13. (C) Ambassador Rice said that she was committed to working very closely with France, with maximum cooperation and collaboration. She briefly reviewed U.S. priorities on peacekeeping, climate change, non-proliferation, and development and welcomed Ripert's views on how France and the U.S. could work together to give the advancement of these issues added horsepower.

The UN's Efficacy and Security Council Reform

14. (C) Ripert said that he was a longstanding and strong supporter of the UN but increasingly concerned about its efficacy. The organization was stuck, he said, due largely to the failure of the 2005 reform process. The biggest problem was the organization's inability to give emerging, moderate powers from the South like Brazil, India, Mexico and others greater decision making authority. In his view, it was difficult for them to engage on the global challenges without

being given greater responsibility to help manage them. With greater responsibility, there was also a better chance these nations would accept more burden sharing and greater financial obligations. In this context, said Ripert, Security Council reform was critical, and the first priority had to be an authentic process on Security Council reform, in which the U.S. was seriously engaged.

15. (C) Ripert noted that India was a case in point. He believes that India's position at the WTO Doha Round and reluctance to engage on climate change were its frustration at not having a greater stake in UN decision-making. Ripert said that India continues to be "useless" when the EU and the US disagree with the "bad guys" on development and other issues because there is no incentive for them to oppose other developing countries. The result is that radical members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77 continue to rule the agenda, and India generally supports them.

16. (C) Ambassador Rice asked for Ripert's views on how to signal greater U.S. engagement on Security Council enlargement without weakening permanent member prerogatives. Ripert answered candidly that he did not know. However, he suggested that as a start, the U.S. be more active in the intergovernmental negotiations that were about to begin. He stressed that past U.S. calls for Security Council reform to be directly linked to the reform of other parts of the UN, had been perceived as a containment strategy. In his view, the U.S. was positioned between France and the UK, which wanted to begin negotiations to save their seats, and Russia and China which opposed any change. The U.S. needed to signal that it wants to move the process forward. Ripert believed that the effect would be more responsible and

cooperative engagement from the likes of India and Brazil, not only on Security Council reform, but also on the other global challenges confronting us.

17. (C) Ambassador Rice questioned whether the perspective of some of these powers on key issues would actually change if they were engaged in a more permanent way on the Security Council. She said that India, in particular, continued to play an unconstructive role on issues such as Iran and Burma. Ripert admitted that his hypothesis was not guaranteed but said he remained convinced that their overall approach would improve. He also noted that traditional big donors at the UN like the US and the EU would need the help of India and others on the budget and scale of assessment discussions to come. If they had more responsibility, he said, they would have to pay more as well.

18. (C) Ripert also raised the issue of Security Council legitimacy. His experience with the EU told him that making decisions with 24-25 is more difficult but once the decisions are made, the legitimacy of these decisions is rarely questioned. The UN membership needed to view the Security Council in the same way.

19. (C) Ripert also commented that Italy's plan for a ministerial level meeting on February 5 in Rome on Security Council reform was unhelpful. Italy, along with other members of the United for Consensus bloc, was trying to block any progress, he said, and France and the UK were actively discouraging others from attending at the ministerial level. He asked that the U.S. consider the same approach to the Rome meeting.

Climate Change and Non-proliferation

110. (C) Ripert said that the Secretary General wanted to engage in a serious way on climate change and he hoped the U.S. would support this. On non-proliferation issues, Ripert said France believed that the P-5 plus 1 process was working well because it ensured both European and Security Council unity. He said that everyone was waiting for the U.S. to "tell us how you want to proceed."

¶11. (C) Ambassador Rice said that the Obama Administration would provide strong leadership on climate change and welcomed the SYG's strong interest. On non-proliferation matters, she said Iran's illicit nuclear program was an urgent challenge but the U.S. did not want to get out of step with the P-5 plus one process and would be working out an approach in the coming weeks, including on timing and sequencing its own engagement with Iran. She asked for Ripert's views on what the Security Council could achieve now on this issue. Ripert responded that the important thing was to maintain unity. There was probably potential for one more sanctions resolution targeting Iran's nuclear network, at which point that route will be "exhausted." Beyond that, the Council would have to look at financial and economic sanctions for which consensus among the P-5 plus one was lacking.

Development, Poverty Alleviation, Food Security

¶12. (C) Ripert said that France was ready to work with the U.S. on this basket of issues. While noting that the EU wanted to keep up the momentum for reform of the global financial architecture, he expressed concern that the UN had a minimal role. Ban was nervous about this, he said, and rightly so. In Ripert's view, the UN needed a role because it was the only institution where least developing and landlocked countries, devastated by the economic downturn, can engage in some fashion. These nations need to have a sense that they are participating and contributing to the discussion. To that end, he noted that the UN Economic and Social Council was now headed by the Luxembourg PermRep who had the right approach and could make a responsible contribution that addressed the concerns of these nations.

Possible UNGA Special Session on Inquiry into Gaza

¶13. (C) In a brief discussion about Security Council meetings this week, including FM Kouchner's initiative for a Council discussion on respect for international humanitarian law on January 29, Ripert reported that there were discussions among members of the Arab Group for a possible special session of the UNGA to call for an inquiry into violations of IHL in Gaza. He opined that the Security Council session on IHL, if handled properly, could deflect this kind of initiative.

Rice